

Abraham Lincoln

From His Own Words and Contemporary Accounts

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GRANT MEETS LINCOLN

General Grant's account of his first interview with President Lincoln, on the occasion in the early Spring of 1864 when he was given command of all the Federal armies, explains many of the reasons for Lincoln's interference in military matters, for which he has been severely criticised. At last Lincoln had found the man who would accept the responsibility and bring final victory.

In my first interview with Mr. Lincoln alone he stated to me that he had never professed to be a military man or to know how campaigns should be conducted, and never wanted to interfere in them: but that procrastination on the part of commanders and the pressure from the people at the North and Congress, which was always with him, forced him into issuing his series of "Military Orders" - one, two, three, etc. He did not know but they were all wrong, and did know that some of them were. All he wanted or had ever wanted was someone who would take the responsibility and act, and call on him for all the assistance needed, pledging himself to use all the power of government in rendering such assistance. Assuring him that I would do the best I could with the means at hand, and avoid as far as possible annoying him or the War Department; our first interview ended.